Charlotte ROUECHÉ

BENEFACTORS IN THE LATE ROMAN PERIOD : THE EASTERN EMPIRE

It is evident that to talk about benefactors in the context of a gathering of epigraphists is essentially to discuss the nature and the limitations of epigraphic evidence — to attempt to establish how much we are the captives of the information which our informants choose to give us. This issue is particularly important for those of us who work on Late Antiquity, because of the alterations in both the number and the nature of inscriptions, which, in this period, form a smaller *proportion* of the total of information available to us about urban life. It is therefore particularly relevant for historians working in this area to apply the techniques which Louis Robert taught us, and to look at inscriptions in close proximity to other kinds of text. But for epigraphers it is also very instructive to look at the changes, over time, in inscriptions ; and the period of Late Antiquity is marked by major changes in epigraphic practice.

Epigraphic Practice in Late Antiquity

In the western empire, and in the eastern empire up to the borders of Syria, the greatest epigraphic change from the third century onwards is the drop in the *number* of inscriptions. Volume after volume of inscriptions shows the same trend — a mass of inscriptions at a particular city from the first, second and third centuries AD, followed by a handful from the fourth, fifth and sixth. Only in Syria and Palestine is there a different pattern. Here, at many sites, there is comparatively little from the imperial period, but an abundance of material from the fourth century into the first decades of the

seventh : but even here, perhaps the significant point is the shortage of material from the earlier period, which makes the later dossier doubly impressive. All such quantitative assessments are, of course, dangerous. There is no way to be sure how many inscriptions were painted rather than cut : Professor Mango has recently pointed to the evidence which the Greek Anthology provides for dedicatory texts accompanying images and buildings well into the sixth century — but very few of these survive on stone [1]. But it would be perverse not to acknowledge some real reduction in epigraphic activity itself, although this may not bear any simple relationship to the reduction or otherwise in the activities traditionally recorded in inscriptions.

There is probably more to be gained by looking at the *changes* in epigraphic practice. It is worth noting, to begin with, that it is, on the whole, surprisingly easy to distinguish a « late Roman » from a « Roman imperial » inscription simply from its appearance, even if it is often extremely difficult to locate that « late Roman » inscription more firmly within the period (say) 250-600. Between 250 and perhaps 325, there seems to have been some change of view as to what type of script was appropriate for a formal, public inscription. All over the eastern empire, but more rapidly at some sites than at others, there is a shift from the formal, standardised monumental scripts of the imperial period, which seem all to aim at a coherent norm for that particular site ; gradually, this normative approach gives way to the use of scripts closer to those of handwriting, of a type which had previously been reserved for the private, or semi-private category of texts. Moreover, the texts inscribed in these more « cursive » hands no longer betray the same concern to conform with one another : instead, there is an increasing tendency throughout the period for contemporary texts to use scripts which *vary* widely from one another.

This change in the use of epigraphic scripts is of great practical importance in helping us to identify texts as late antique ; it may be that it also tells us something about how such texts were conceived. It is clearly linked to the reduction in the number of inscriptions : if there was no longer full-time employment for an epigraphic mason, who could maintain consistent standards, the carving of inscriptions would be entrusted to « non-specialists ». There are other changes in this period which may be more significant.

---

1. C. MANGO, « Épigrammes honorifiques, statues et portraits à Byzance », in *Αφιέρωμα στόν Νίκο Σβορώνο* (Rethymno, 1986), I, 23-35 ; see also the comments of M. LEPELLEY, above p. 329.

Categories of inscribed texts

Certain categories of text are diminished or eliminated. Agonistic inscriptions — that is, those honouring competitors — virtually disappear (the latest which I know is an epigram in praise of a wrestler, John, from Smyrna, put up between 384 and 392 in the headquarters of the international athletic synod at Rome) [2], and with them goes a whole body of information about athletic and cultural contests. But it is extremely dangerous to argue from this development that such contests had ceased ; and some of the texts honouring benefactors, cited by Cl. Lepelley, serve as evidence of the continuity of agonistic activites [3]. Civic decrees, and regulatory inscriptions for private bodies, become very rare. On the other hand, there is a new abundance of inscribed decrees and regulations from the imperial government, from the edict of Diocletian onwards.

One category of inscription, however, continues, but is radically changed : and that is the honorific inscriptions which are our main source of information about benefactors. I am defining these as all the inscriptions recording the honours paid by a community to a benefactor, whether an emperor, a governor, or a local citizen : and I would see as a sub-category of such inscriptions the « building inscriptions » which record the people responsible for one particular benefaction. It can be quite misleading to separate these categories in the manner of the old corpora. While I have attempted elsewhere to reach some conclusions about the activity of late antique benefactors at Aphrodisias from their inscriptions, I am now more and more aware of the extent to which our understanding is limited by the circumstances governing the evidence. Thus, I observed that the men honoured for public works in the fourth century at Aphrodisias were largely governors and imperial officials, while in the fifth century we find an increasing number of inscriptions honouring private and local benefactors [4]. I still think that this observation is significant, and that the appearance of private benefactors in the later fifth century, at Aphrodisias and at other cities in Asia Minor, reflects real developments ; but the reduced number of inscriptions honouring governors may simply be the consequence of the late fourth century legislation which required communities to obtain imperial permission before putting up

---

2. *IGUR* 245.

3. On this see C. ROUECHÉ, *Performers and Partisans at Aphrodisias* (London, 1993), Chapter 1.

4. C. ROUECHÉ, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity* (London, 1989), xxv-vi.

a statue to a governor — with the clear intention of cutting down on such honours [5].

So it may be more fruitful to consider the ways in which benefactors were honoured in the late Roman period and, above all, the changes in the kind of text considered appropriate for such inscriptions. The honorific texts of the Roman period were consistent and normative both in their script and in their content, even if the inscribed texts of the Greek cities never achieved quite the reliable regularity of those in the Latin world [6]. Such texts can be dated not only by the changes in script and appearance which I have mentioned, but even by their actual content.

There is one change which I have discussed in detail elsewhere, and shall only outline here [7]. From some time in the third century, it became appropriate to honour a benefactor by inscribing the texts of the public acclamations which had been used to honour him. That development, it could be argued, brings the record on the stone closer to the actual event at which the honours were conferred : it is a development from the old inscribed decree.

The other major development, however, is entirely different in character. As so often, it was Louis Robert who identified the increasing use, in the late roman period, of verse epigrams to honour office holders and benefactors. It is now 44 years since Robert's *Hellenica* IV — *Épigrammes du Bas-Empire* — first appeared. That study was enormously influential ; but it seems to me that there still remain more points to be brought out.

Robert devoted *Hellenica* IV to the analysis of a series of understudied inscribed, honorific epigrams, from all over the Greek world, pointing out that they were very similar in many aspects of their language and thought, and that they were all from the late antique period — from the later third century to the end of the sixth. The majority of the texts which he examined were in honour of governors. While his work has been extensively used, few people have commented on the more general conclusions :

> « Pendant cette époque les gouverneurs sont ordinairement honorés par des inscriptions d'un type tout différent de celles qu'on gravait à la

5. *CJ* I.24.1, of 398 decrees that governors cannot accept a statue, even in marble, extra *imperiale beneficium*, at least during their terms of office ; on the literature see most recently D. FEISSEL, « Notes d'épigraphie chrétienne VII », *BCH* 108 (1984), 548-56.

6. On this see M. CHRISTOL, « Les hommages publics de Volubilis : épigraphie et vie municipale », *L'Africa Romana* III (Sassari 1986), 83-96, observing the consistency — even monotony — of honours, especially those paid to to external figures.

7. C. M. ROUECHÉ, « Acclamations in the later Roman empire : new evidence from Aphrodisias », *JRS* 74 (1984), 181-99.

gloire de leur prédécesseurs du Haut-Empire. Les unes et les autres accompagnaient des statues, sur la base desquel»es elles étaient gravées. Mais sous le Haut-Empire ces inscriptions publiques sont presque toujours en prose, Sous le Bas-Empire elles sont normalement des épigrammes ; le nombre des inscriptions en prose est très faible ; on a *normalement* recours à la poésie pour glorifier un gouverneur ou — le cas est devenu beaucoup plus rare — un généreux citoyen » [8].

This is not a phenomenon limited to the East. The majority of the honorific inscriptions in Christian Gaul are in verse [9]. Many of the Christian sanctuaries of Gaul and Italy have important verse inscriptions — most strikingly those of Paulinus at Nola, and the enormous output of Pope Damasus [10].

There is an initial and simple consequence of this development. The inscriptions of this period are a great deal less informative than those of the Roman imperial period. The primary concern of the text is no longer to give us a formal account of the offices and responsibilities of the man honoured. This is exemplified by the many unclarities which Robert was able to elucidate only by comparing several texts. We are no longer told that a man was a governor, but that he was noted for his « incorruptible justice » or his « clean hands » ; we are not given an account of the gifts of a benefactor, but merely a reference to his « many acts of piety to his motherland ». That has the immediate result that there are severe limits on the historical account which I can give you of what benefactors did. Nor can I easily tell you who they were, when they are most often named without a patronymic. It therefore seems more fruitful to look at how they were honoured, and see what this seems to imply.

Epigrams in the Roman period

The inscribed epigram — a poem to accompany a monument of some kind — is of course a form of great antiquity. From the sixth to the second centuries B.C. epigrams appear on a wide range of monuments. But, by the Roman period the « public » uses of inscribed epigrams had become severely limited ; the vast majority of inscribed epigrams from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. are funerary — to such an extent that honorific epigrams

8. *Hellenica* IV (Paris, 1948), 109 ; the italics are mine.

9. See the article of M. GUYON, above, p. 141.

10. See the article of Mmes DUVAL and PIETRI, below, p. 363.

have frequently been assumed to be funerary simply from their form [11]. As the public verse inscriptions dwindle, the funerary verse inscriptions become more and more abundant during the period, although there is some variation in their distribution : at Aphrodisias, for example, we have very few. This change must have implications for how verse inscriptions were perceived. In trying to understand the use of the later texts, therefore, it is necessary to investigate the earlier uses of verse inscriptions, at least summarily.

The main non-funerary area where verse seems to continue to be inscribed in the Roman imperial period seems to be in a *religious* context. There are of course inscribed verse oracles and hymns, texts which reveal the function of verse as appropriate to religious subjects [12]. Epigrams are inscribed for dedications [13] and more generally in sanctuaries and to honour priests at several sanctuaries, — Didyma [14] Eleusis or Delphi. Pausanias, honoured in verse at Cyrene in 2 AD, was a priest [15]. It is particularly unsurprising to find verse honours at Thespiae, home of the cult of the Muses, and a festival in their honour at which poets competed : here a group of statues of the Muses, each with an epigram, was complemented by a statue of Livia, also honoured with a verse epigram by the same poet, in which she was associated with the divinity *Mnemosyne* [16]. Later Hadrian was to make a verse dedication at Thespiae to the neighbouring cult of Eros [17]. This is also probably the thinking behind the large number of epigrams carved on or near the Colossus of Memnon by visitors — of which a very well-known group

---

11. D. FEISSEL, « Notes d'épigraphie chrétienne VII », 546-58, in examining several late epigrams, demonstrates in passing the tendency of earlier editors to equate epigram with funerary text ; see for example L. ROBERT, *OMS* IV, 124, for the resultant misunderstanding of an epigram at Sinope.

12. As for example in the cult regulations, *Ins. Smyrna* 728 ; or hymns to Isis, *SEG* 8.548-51, I cent BC (Medinet-Madi, Egypt).

13. Thus some random examples : a dedication to the Nymphs near Lycaonian Laodicaea, T. DREW-BEAR, *Gnomon* 59 (1987), 612-4 (*SEG* 37.1239 ; *BullEp* 1988.65) ; an altar to Nike, *Ins. Smyrna* 763 ; a metrical dedication at Dodona : H. PETERSMANN, in *WS* 100 (1987), 5-12 ; a dedication to Dionysus, from Bithynia, S. G. COLE, *EpAnat* 4 (1984) 37-49, with *BullEp* 1988.59 ; a dedicatory epigram of the 1 or 2 cent., from Syria apparently dedicating a dovecote to Zeus, *SEG* 37.1538 ; *IEph* 1253 and 4 (Asclepius) ; 607 (Heracles) ; 2058 & 9 & 60 (Hestia) ; 4328 (Artemis, by a philosopher) ; 1240 (altar for Zeus : see L. ROBERT, *RPh.* 85 (1959), 222 n.7).

14. See below, note 31 and Plate I.

15. Ed. G. OLIVERIO, *DAI* II, *Cirenaica* I, 1933, 100-2, n.67, whence *SEG* 9.63.

16. On these inscriptions see C. P. JONES, « A leading family of Roman Thespiae », *HSCP* 74 (1970), 223-55, especially pp. 249-55. There are two other honorific inscribed epigrams here from the Roman period : pp. 234, n° 13, is a 2 line epigram from the dedication of a statue, from the 2nd quarter of the 2nd century ; no 22, p. 243, is perhaps early c.III.

17. *IG*.7.1828, with E. BOWIE, « Poetry and poets in Asia and Achaia », in Averil CAMERON and Susan WALKER, eds., *The Greek Renaissance in the Roman Empire* (London, 1989), 200.

are those left by members of the party who visited it with Hadrian in 130 ; of 107 inscriptions on the Colossus, 39 are in verse [18].

Another category of non-funerary epigrams which continue to be inscribed throughout the Roman imperial period is that of *agonistic* epigrams, in honour of particular victors [19]. This may simply reflect the strength of that particular tradition ; but I think that it may also reflect the fact that agonistic activity falls in the *religious* sphere. This may, for example, explain the use of verse in a fragmentary inscription, recently published, from Aezani, which perhaps records the presence of visiting delegations at the inauguration of a contest [20].

Some poems, even if not epitaphs, clearly honour the *dead*. One group of such poems is perhaps those by T. Flavius Glaucus, in the early third century, commemorating members of his family ; but as they were being honoured at Eleusis, where they had been involved in the cult, these can also be explained by their *religious* context [21]. In the 160s Herodes Atticus had two long inscriptions in honour of his dead wife, Regilla, composed and inscribed on her estate [22]. Another interesting example is a verse epigram honouring the deceased donor of the library at Cremna ; but the use of verse here may also reflect the fact that the donor was himself a poet [23].

A further genre of inscribed epigrams which continued throughout the Roman period, are those concerning *writers* and « intellectuals » ; most famously, Plutarch was honoured by the Amphictyons and the people of Chaeronea in verse on a herm at Delphi, although this may well also have been put up after his death [24]. Similarly the philosopher Ofellius Laetus was honoured with epigrams at Athens and Ephesus and the sophist Soterus at

---

18. Edited most recently by A. and E. BERNAND, *Les inscriptions du Colosse de Memnon* (Paris, 1960), especially pp. 15-24.

19. Thus for example an epigram for a victor : *SEG* 37.71, from Chios, 161 AD or just after ; an epigram for an athlete at Ephesus, IEph 1626, considered by W. PEEK, *JÖAI* 57 (1986-7), 103-10, whence *SEG* 37.901. At Aphrodisias, in the third century, a civic decree, from Ephesus, for a successful athlete is inscribed on one face of his statue base, and an epigram on another : the epigram first published by C. P. JONES, « Two inscriptions from Aphrodisias », *BSCP* 85 (1981), 107-129 (whence *SEG* 31.904, cf. *SEG* 34.1045), republished, C. ROUECHÉ, *Performers and Partisans at Aphrodisias*, n° 72. For victors at Synnada in the third century, *MAMA* IV.67 and 68.

20. *MAMA* IX.48, with commentary.

21. See most recently E. BOWIE, « Greek sophists and Greek poetry in the Second Sophistic », *ANRW* II.33.1 (1989), 236-240.

22. Published most recently as *IGUR* III.1155, with a lavish bibliography.

23. For Chrysippos, early 2nd cent. ; most recently published by G. HORSLEY, *AS* 37 (1987), 51-3, and see below, Plate II.

24. *Syll*[3] 843.

Ephesus [25] ; poetry was used to honour poets (one a victor in a local contest) at Cyzicus [26]. At Athens, an epigram was appended to a prose inscription honouring the historian Dexippus, probably in the early 270s ; the prose inscription lists his public services, and the epigram concentrates on his achievements as a writer [27].

Some verse honours are found in a context which cannot be explained using any of these criteria. Those for a local aristocrat at Susa, in the 1st century AD, may simply reflect a continuation of Hellenistic traditions outside the empire [28], and similar considerations may explain the first century AD epigram in honour of Ariobarzanes of Cappadocia, from the temple of Jupiter in Damascus [29]. But it may be that this is a false classification, and that our perception of where the boundary between religious and secular runs is mistaken.

The lack of public verse inscriptions in the Roman imperial period cannot be explained by a reduction in the writing of poetry. Ewen Bowie has discussed the poetic activity of the period in a recent series of articles [30] ; and throughout the period verse continued to be used for epitaphs. It must tell us more about how poetry was perceived, and about what honorific inscriptions were considered to be. It seems to me clear that poetry was seen not just as a simple alternative, but as in some sense essentially different . This is suggested in some cases, by looking at the inscriptions themselves, where there is sometimes clear differentiation between the script used for prose and for verse. This can be seen for example in an inscription at Didyma, an honorific prose text and epigram for Euphrosynos, neokoros of Pythian Artemis, dated before 221 (Plate I). Both texts are inscribed in a monumental hand. But the epigram is in smaller letters (0.01-0.022 as opposed to main text, 0.03). It uses a very tiny omicron, some square *sigmas*, and a slightly different *nu*,

---

25. For Ofellius Laetus, *IEph*.3901, with J. NOLLÉ, *ZPE* 41 (1981), 197-206 and G. BOWERSOCK, *GRBS* 23 (1982) 275-9 ; Soterus, *IEph* 1548 (*JÖAI* 40 (1953) 15-6).

26. *IGR* IV.163, 164.

27. *IG* II².3625 ; for the date see F. MILLAR, « P. Herennius Dexippus », *JRS* 59 (1969), 12-29, especially p. 21. The photograph of this stone, P. GRAINDOR, *Album d'inscriptions attiques d'époque impériale* (Gand, 1924), pl. 83, n° 105, shows exactly the same epigraphic script used for the prose and the verse, in contrast to the inscriptions discussed below.

28. *SEG* 7. 12 (7/22 BC) and 13, 1/2 AD.

29. *SEG* 7.224.

30. « Poetry and poets in Asia and Achaia », in Averil CAMERON and Susan WALKER, eds., *The Greek Renaissance in the Roman Empire* (London, 1989), 198-205 ; « Greek poetry in the Antonine age » in D. A. RUSSELL, ed., *Antonine Literature* (Oxford, 1990), 83-90 ; « Greek sophists and Greek poetry in the Second Sophistic », *ANRW* II.33.1 (1989), 209-58.

giving a very different overall appearance [31]. In the inscription, mentioned above, honouring Chrysippos in his library at Cremna, the formal prose heading is in a standard II-III cent. public script, but the script of the poem is sharply differentiated, using cursive *omega*, *epsilon* and *sigma* (Plate II) [32]. A similar distinction can be seen on a fragmentary inscription from Cyrene, where a list of names, in a formal script, is accompanied by a verse in a smaller and less regular hand [33]. This seems to suggest that verse was perceived as being essentially different from the prose of the standard honorific inscriptions, and that it was appropriate for certain specific functions. If this conclusion is correct, then the move to the use of verse in the honorific inscriptions of Late Antiquity does represent a real change.

Epigrams in Late Antiquity

It is interesting that the change in sensibility on these matters appears to come in the middle of the third century, apparently somewhat before the transformations which led to the dramatic reduction in inscriptions. It seems to be in the 240s that we come across the first epigrams which clearly use verse instead of prose to honour secular officials and benefactors, although it is frustratingly hard to identify a clearly dated series of examples. An epigram was used to honour a high priest of Asia at Synnada, in the third century, but presumably before Phrygia ceased to form part of the province of Asia in c. 250 ; another text honours a civic high priest who can be dated under Gordian [34]. Another third century example from Ephesus has been pointed out to me by Professor Eck, to whom I am most grateful : Scaurianus, honoured there in an epigram in an elegant script of the third century, is now identifiable as a procurator of the province of Asia. It is characteristic of such epigrams that, until the new prose inscription appeared, Scaurianus' function was very unclear, and he appeared most probably to be an architect [35]. A clearly dateable group of such inscriptions are those recording the rebuilding of the walls of Athens, now dated to the reign of Probus

---

31. W. GÜNTHER, « Inschriften von Didyma », *IstMitt* 35 (1985)181-93. N° 3, p. 185-8, illustrated pl. 41 ; *SEG* 35.1097 ; I am grateful to Dr. GÜNTHER for providing this photograph.

32. I am grateful to Dr. HORSLEY for his help, and to Dr. Stephen MITCHELL, Director of the survey at Cremna, for this photograph.

33. G. PUGLIESE CARRATELLI, « Supplemento Epigrafico Cirenaico », *ASAA* 23-4 (1961-2), 219-375, n° 68 and pl. 60 facing p. 257 ; I am grateful to Joyce REYNOLDS for pointing out this example.

34. *MAMA* IV.66 and 67.

35. So J. KEIL, *JÖAI* 30 (1937) *Beiblatt* 204, n° 10 and plate 10, followed by ROBERT, *Hell.* IV.73-4. Scaurianus' titles are set out in a text recently published by D. KNIBBE and H. ENGELMANN, *JÖAI* 55 (1984), 140 n° 4365, whence *AE* 1988.1022.

(276-82) or a little later [36]. Two of these honour Claudius Illyrius, who is also apparently honoured in an epigram at Corinth [37]. His verse honours could perhaps be explained by the fact that he was clearly a poet (so *IG* II.5201), but on the same walls another epigram honours a commander (?), Panathenius, perhaps dateable to 267 [38]. Two further epigrams were used to record the building work by an Asiarch in the Baths of Faustina at Miletus, so when that city still remained in Asia [39] ; this may, however, have been as late as the Tetrarchy, since under Diocletian and Maximian, Didyma was still under the proconsul of Asia, Festus, who recorded his restoration of the temple of Apollo there in three long epigrams [40]. A local benefactor honoured in a series of epigrams is Bryonianus Lollianus of Side, who has been convincingly dated under Diocletian [41].

From then on, governors and local benefactors are honoured, as Robert said, more often in verse than in prose, and with terminology that sometimes makes it hard to distinguish one from the other. There are plenty of examples of this, many elucidated by Robert. He pointed out, for example, the frequency in such epigrams of praise for wisdom, which is used of private citizens and of governors [42]. In some cases this may perhaps reflect intellectual activities on the part of the man honoured, as I have argued for an inscription at Aphrodisias — and yet the text really says nothing more than that he was wise [43]. An epigram at Delphi praises a certain Philiscus for his wisdom, and the first editor took this as necessarily referring to a known sophist, described by Philostratus (*Vit. Soph.* 2.30) [44] ; yet the man here is described holding an imperial appointment, while most of what we know of Philiscus concerns his bad relations with Caracalla. The reference to wisdom

36. A. FRANTZ, *The Athenian Agora* XXIV : *Late Antiquity : 267-700* (Princeton 1988), 10-11.

37. *IG* II.2.5199, 5200 (Athens), and L. ROBERT, *REG* 740-2 (*OMS* VI.558-60) (Corinth) ; on these and on Illyrius see M. CHRISTOL, *Essai sur l'evolution des carrières sénatoriales dans la deuxième moitié du IIIe s. ap. J.C.* (Paris, 1986), 181-2.

38. *IG* II.2, 5201, with FRANTZ, *op. cit.*, 10-11 (with plate).

39. *Milet* I.9, *Thermen und Palaestren* ed. A. von GERKAN and F. KRISCHEN (Berlin, 1928), n° 339, a and b. On the date see C. ROUECHÉ, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity*, 41-2.

40. *SEG* IV.467, with *PLRE* I, Festus 7.

41. C. FOSS, *ZPE* 26 (1977), 161-71, with J.-M. CARRIÉ, *ZPE* 35 (1979), 213-24.

42. L. ROBERT, *REG* 79 (1966), 740-2 (= *OMS* VI.558-60).

43. C. ROUECHÉ, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity*, 33.

44. R. FLACELIÈRE, *BCH* 73 (1949), 473, n° 11 ; *Fouilles de Delphes* III.4.273.

here need not be seen as more than standard praise for an official [45]. Wisdom is also a desirable asset in women — thus the benefactress Scholasticia is praised in an epigram at Ephesus for her wisdom [46] — and in church leaders.

For one striking phenomenon is that verse is used to praise bishops just as much as other benefactors, and in very similar terminology. A sixth century bishop at Thessalian Thebes (Nea Anchialos) is praised as « teacher of the wise bee » [47] ; another, at Boeotian Thebes, is « the reverend and wise teacher of the orthodox faith » [48]. Alexander, bishop of Nicea, is praised, in an epigram recording his building of baths, as « star of famed wisdom » [49]. Moreover, the terminology of their authority is similar to that used of secular officials ; a bishop at an unidentified site in Bulgaria is said to be « allotted to care for the archiepiscopal throne » [50], using a term — θῶκος — characteristically used in epigrams of the « throne » of imperial officials [51]. Similarly, a bishop in Palestine is described in closely similar language as « allotted to direct the throne » [52], using a verb — ἰθύνειν — which is frequently used of governors [53].

The overall impression made by reading these inscriptions is that they all praise various members of a homogeneous ruling class, who may become governors, or bishops, or remain local benefactors, but who seek similar honours. And those honours, by their very nature, emphasise that all the persons concerned are members of an educated class. It is the culture of such men — who must be cultivated simply to understand the praises applied to them — which is emphasised, while their achievements are very vaguely described. As a result, the inscriptions are even more closely similar to one another than the formal texts of the Roman imperial period. The same phrases are found in epigrams from widely different areas. While many of these poems will have been composed by local citizens, some must be the

---

45. What is not clear is the nature of Philiscus' office. He was appointed by plural emperors, « to judge the cities of Thessaly », « in charge of property » ὑπὲρ κτεάνων ; the first phrase suggests a governor, but the second a procurator. He should perhaps be seen as a procuratorial governor of the new province of Thessaly, on a parallel with the procuratorial governor of Epirus, Aelius Aelianus (*PLRE* I, Aelianus 7 ; H-G. PFLAUM, *Les carrières procuratoriennes equestres*, 949-52). This would then be the earliest attestation of the existence of Thessaly — at a period when the Amphictyons were still active.

46. *IEph.* 453.

47. D. FEISSEL, *T&M* 10 (1987), 363, n° 7.

48. *BCH* 92 (1968), 863, cited by FEISSEL, loc. cit.

49. *AP* xvi.281.

50. V. BESEVLIEV, *Spätgriechische und spätlateinische Inschriften aus Bulgarien* (1964), 239, republished by R. PILLINGER, *RAC* 61 (1985), 296-8, whence *SEG* 35.763.

51. See L. ROBERT, *Hellenica* IV.41-3.

52. *SEG* 8.119.

53. *Hell.* IV, 86 ff.

work of the « wandering poets » of the period [54] : for example, a local benefactor at Aphrodisias is honoured with an epigram by a rhetor from Tralles [55], and a city prefect of Rome who built baths at Tibur is honoured with a poem composed by a sophist resident in Rome, but who gives his origin as from Laodicea on the Lycus [56].

In the case of the secular benefactors, both local benefactors and governors are praised for similar attributes ; more strikingly, similar terminology is used of their relationship to the communities which honour them. The theme of exchange between the community and the person honoured is equally common in epigrams for governors [57] or for private benefactors [58].

It can therefore be argued that the emergence of the use of verse for such honours, from the third century onwards, parallels the emergence of a new ruling class — or a change in the way that the existing ruling class perceives itself : the crucial indicator is now a shared education. This tradition can of course be traced back to the Hellenistic period [59]. If so, the use of verse could perhaps be seen as a development of the earlier usage to honour « men of letters ». While I believe this to be the case I am not certain that this is a sufficient explanation of this change in practice. There is something rather audacious about praising an imperial official, or a powerful man, in a medium which has not hitherto been considered appropriate. That the use of verse was perceived as innovatory is perhaps indicated by the fact that it is some time before it comes to be used of emperors. While secular benefactors are honoured in verse from at least the late third century, the earliest use of verse for recording the achievements of an emperor seems to be in inscriptions recording the restoration of the walls of Thessalonica by Theodosius II, in the mid fifth century [60] or honours for the empress Eudocia at Athens in the 420s [61] ; the majority of the verse inscriptions for emperors date from the sixth century [62].

---

54. See Alan CAMERON, « Wandering poets », *Historia* 14 (1965), 470-509.

55. C. ROUECHÉ, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity*, no. 38.

56. Honorific epigram for Lampadius, c. 365 AD. who has built baths : epigram composed by « Eudemus of Laodicea, sophist of the Romans », L. MORETTI, *RPAA* 57 (1984-5), 233-41, whence *SEG* 35.1055, *BullEp* 1988.69.

57. *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity*, no. 16, *Ins. Smyrna*.636.

58. *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity*, nos. 82, 88.

59. See the remarks of M. MIGEOTTE, above, p. 183.

60. D. FEISSEL, *Recueil des inscriptions chrétiennes de Macédoine* (Paris, 1983), 88, cf 89, for Hormisdas.

61. E. SIRONEN, « An honorary epigram for Empress Eudocia in the Athenian Agora », *Hesperia* 59 (1990), 371-4.

62. E. g., Anastasius : *AP* ix.656, 657 ; Justinian : *SEG* 2.377, from Illyricum (Balsi), *IEph* 1354, *AP* IX.641 ; Justin II : *AP* ix.658, 812, 813.

In trying to understand how verse was perceived, and why it was considered suitable or unsuitable for different contexts at different periods, it is necessary to recall the unbroken tradition of funerary verse. It may be that verse was seen in the Roman imperial period as being somehow appropriate to the private sphere, and not to the public, and that in the later empire this distinction between public and private was becoming blurred. The « public » entity in the eastern Mediterranean world was the city : and from the third century on the political authority of the cities was much reduced. The prose inscriptions of the imperial period praised benefactors who were just as dominant as the grandees of the later empire ; but the inscriptions reflected, in their formulae, the institutions and structures of civic government. In the inscriptions of the later empire, the council is sometimes mentioned, but more often it is simply the city which gives the honours : and it does so, not in the traditional formulae of public life, derived from the language of a decree passed by the council and approved by the people, but in a medium which reflects the private learning of the individual members of the élite class. This freedom is perhaps paralleled by the new freedom in choosing the script of an inscription, and an increasing tendency, apparently deliberate, to use differing scripts, rather than adhering to a standard style. It can always be argued that none of these inscriptions were read, and that all were equally incomprehensible ; but that does not diminish the significance of the change from honouring a man with a public declaration of his status and his achievements, to honouring him with a literary artefact, whose prime aim is not to convey information, but to emphasis the culture of those involved in the transaction.

To return to Aphrodisias. In, probably, the early sixth century, a local benefactor, Albinus, was honoured in two ways. He was honoured in a long series of acclamations, whose main function was to record an occasion on which the populace had honoured him, and to serve, to a certain extent, the functions of a building inscription ; and he was also honoured with, apparently, a statue, accompanied by a verse inscription on its base [63]. From these two sources we extract remarkably little information about Albinus, his career or his benefactions. Instead, we know that he was honoured by the élite in terminology appropriate to that élite anywhere in the empire ; and he was honoured by the populace in a legally acceptable form which could be reported directly to the imperial authorities. Despite the references to « the city », it is really the civic institutions which are invisible in this process. The world is made up of the people, the élite, and the emperor, in one ecumenical entity. As a result, it will gradually become less and less relevant to be honoured at all from « below » ; the only source of honours will be the emperor. During the sixth century, we know of an upsurge in the writing of

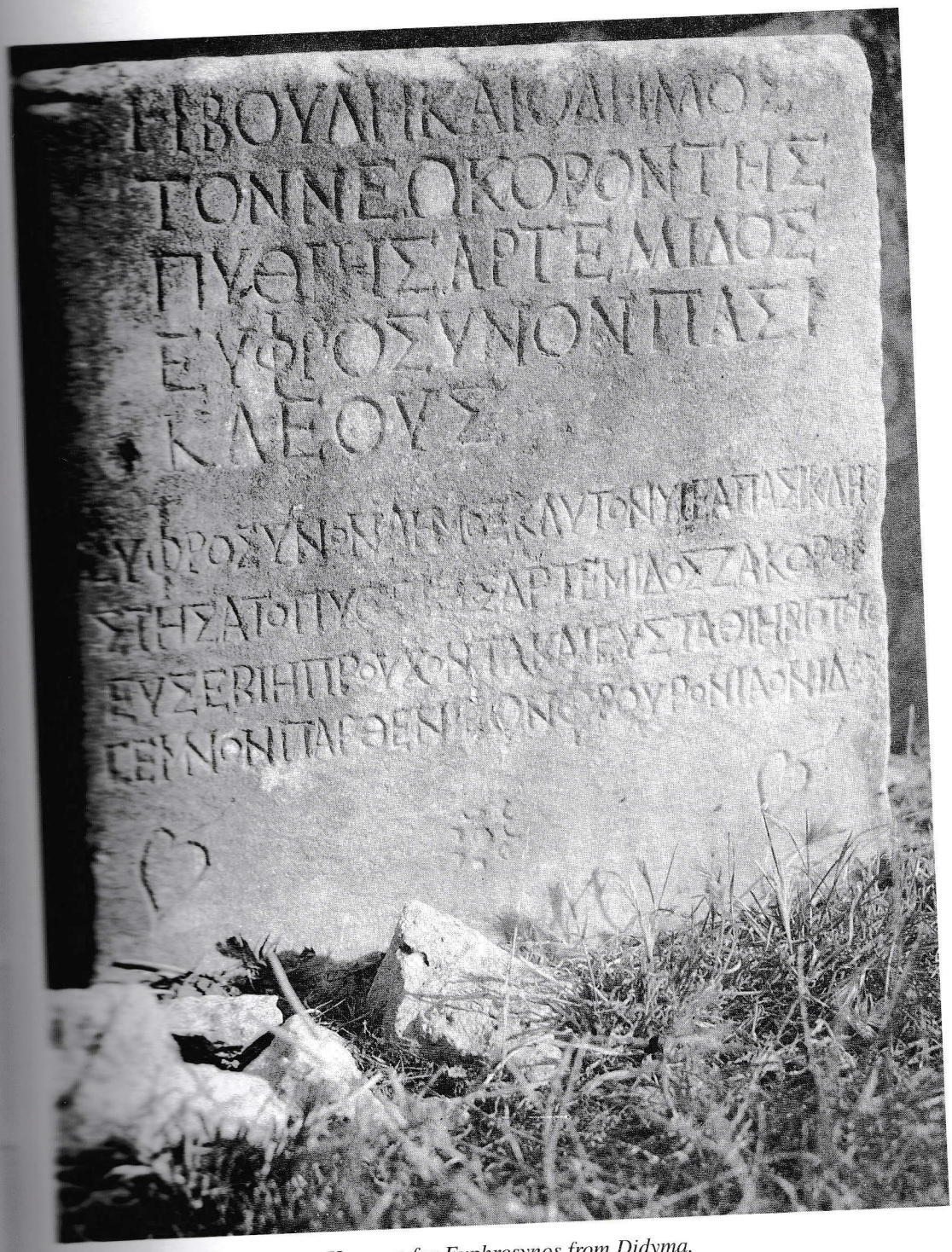
63. *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity*, nos. 83 and 82.

epigrams by members of the élite for one another, recorded in the Cycle of Agathias in the Greek Anthology. But, by the early seventh century, honorific inscriptions and monuments for anyone except the emperor himself have virtually disappeared [64]. Instead, the emperor is now the the only person to be honoured, and the only person to bestow honours — supported by the ritual acclamations of the populace.

But even after these changes, the tradition of benefactions would continue. The language and the ideology of benefaction was taken over from the civic communities into the new Christian community. The Christian benefactor would look to God for honours and rewards ; but he also related to a community. Throughout the Byzantine period, rich individuals continued to endow churches or monasteries : in so doing, they were repaying something of their debt to God, and obtaining the esteem, and the prayers, of a Christian community. The 10th century legislation to restrain ambitious donors from founding new monasteries, when older ones need support, is surprisingly similar to the Roman and late Roman legislation restricting secular donors in the same way. But only occasionally do these donors appear in any kind of inscription.

I have argued that the most informative aspect of the late Antique inscriptions which honour benefactors is not in their content, but their form. A better understanding of how that new form came to be adopted might help us to comprehend the change in mentality which, particularly in the Eastern empire, so clearly demarcates the « Roman » from the « late Roman » period, whether pagan or Christian.

64. On all this see MANGO, art. cit. above, note 1.



Honours for Euphrosynos from Didyma.

Honours for Chrysippus, from the library at Cremna.